

## The Use of Social Media in Public Services Delivery: A Case in Selected West Java Local Governments

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### ABSTRACT

Adoption of social media by government agencies is typically associated with the promotion of transparency, participation, and cooperation. However, less emphasis has been placed on the use of social media for public service delivery. As a result, this article investigates the tactics used by eight local governments in West Java Province to develop content for social media. To that end, the research re-creates a well-known interpretive framework of social media interactions in the public sector, focusing on three categories: information provision, citizen involvement, and public service delivery. The present research puts the methodology to the test by analyzing Twitter data from a key collection of local governments. The findings support the use of social media to disseminate institutional information and encourage connections with people. At the same time, local governments in West Java are beginning to employ social media to perform public services.

**Keywords:** social media; local government; public service; twitter

### INTRODUCTION

Social media is a broad phrase that refers to a wide range of digital platforms with capabilities that facilitate information transmission and bidirectional connections. Within the last few years, researchers' discussions on web 2.0's major impact on public administration have been mesmerized by social media's communicative and interactive possibilities. It is reasonable as social media platforms are potential to promote accountability, stimulate citizen engagement, and strengthen collaboration among government, public administrations, and related stakeholders (Picazo-Vela, Fernandez-Haddad, and Luna-Reyes, 2016). Some related studies have also noted that social media provides opportunities to public sector organizations (Bertot, Jaeger, & Hansen, 2012) and have strengthened the idea of using social media to deliver public service (Chatfield and Reddick, 2018; Rodriguez-Bolivar, 2015).

In the context of social media adoption in the public sector, literature has displayed three distinct perspectives of public service delivery. The first perspective believes that web 2.0 social media technologies are not intended for use in the delivery of public services. This perspective is proposed by Mergel (2013) and Zavattaro and Sementelli (2014). The second perspective says that social media has the ability to improve the delivery of public services in some way. This perspective comes from studies conducted by Bonsón, Royo, and Ratkai (2015) and Jukić and Merlak (2017).

The third perspective acknowledges that social media would be effective for specific and restricted public service delivery. It is relevant to the assumption that public service delivery is a part of co-production strategy as proposed by Rodríguez-Bolivar and Alcaide (2018).

The present research is in line with the third perspective. Indonesia, as the fourth-largest population in the world, is also a potential place for growing digital governmental interaction and services. Modern governmental management should promote agency activities, public transportation in policy making, and collaboration with other organization through social media. These changes should be adopted soon by local governments, specifically in West Java. In our study, the relevance of the local level of government is multifaceted.

Local governments have received a lot of attention in social media research (Medaglia and Zheng 2017), owing to their proximity to inhabitants (Cegarra, Córdoba, and Moreno 2012). They also confront significant hurdles, such as integrating individuals with public service delivery (Zavattaro, French, and Mohanty 2015; Nalbandian et al. 2013). This approach stems from a long heritage of engagement in the local public realm (Ellison and Hardey 2014), with the understanding that some processes can only be managed at this level. Last but not least, local governments play an important role in public service delivery by providing some essential services for people's daily lives, and they are more likely to embrace social media innovations in public service delivery (Sáez, Haro, and Caba 2015).

As a result, the aim of the present research is to add to the study of local government social media usage. As a result, this research poses the following research question: what tactics do local governments utilize to develop content for social media? As a reaction, this research also categorises the practical usage as push (offering information), pull (interaction), and networking (creating networks), by incorporating a new dimension based on service delivery.

The present research anticipates an early use of social media for public service delivery, either as a supportive role (for example, providing real-time updates on traffic, street maintenance status, or weather alerts, among other issues) or by enabling some transactions, such as collaborative provision with citizen assistance. Thus, it is essential put the system to the test by analysing the content of Twitter postings from the selected local governments in West Java Province.

## METHOD

The present research did an exploratory investigation of social media use across eight local governments in West Java to assess how the categories operate in real-world circumstances. In order to categorize the material, the present research picked Twitter data and analyzed it. In this part, it can be described how the author finished the case study selection and how the author processed the data using a semantic algorithm. In this section, the present research stresses the importance of these data processing techniques in supporting and expanding future studies on social media in local governments.

### *Data selection*

The present research opted to concentrate on the analysis of Twitter data. The decision to use Twitter was made for a variety of reasons. First, unlike other widely used social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter allows academics simple access to automatically extracting data via its public API (Application Programming Interface), which is accessible and extremely versatile in terms of querying. Second, Twitter is an extremely popular social media tool. Third, it has been shown in the literature that Twitter is one of the most widely used social media platforms by local governments Criado, Pastor, and Villodre 2018), primarily to interact with opinion leaders, political actors, mass media, and journalists, but also with associations, civil

society organizations, NGOs, and other local influencers and individuals.

The author retrieved Twitter data from the 1st of March 2021 to the 31st of March 2021 (1 month). The present research anticipates public administrations to be even more active on these occasions since they include promoting events for residents, pandemic information, and local governments are often participating in a leadership position. Only tweets sent by the principal Twitter profiles of the chosen local governments were included in the extracted data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of research. To begin, it shows the aggregated findings for all instances. Then, facts about our chosen local governments are provided with consideration for the government's administrative system. At first glance, the analysis reveals some significant data that will be used to generate ideas regarding social media usage strategies at the local level of government.

### *A collective approach to social media at the local level of government*

In general, local governments have devised social media strategies that are clearly focused on providing institutional information (41% of the tweets examined). It is also mentioned here that local governments are making a concerted effort to adopt participatory and interactive tactics with citizens through social media (48% of the analyzed tweets). Finally, although it is still in its early stages, local governments in West Java are showing an interest in public service delivery (12%).

Table 1 Aggregated results for local government in West Java

No	Category	Percentage
1	Public service delivery	12.20%
2	Providing information	41.03%
3	Citizen interaction	48.18%

At this stage, it is critical to concentrate on the indications or categories of tweets associated with public service delivery. For starters, one of the most widespread uses that local governments have implemented under this category is alerts and early warnings on a wide range of issues, including traffic problems (particularly traffic jams and cuts), water supply issues, weather events, tree falls, traffic signaling problems, and accidents.

Table 2. Analysis of semantic features for local governments on Twitter (%)

Indicators	Local Governments							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Providing information	35.24	18.36	53.46	42.67	24.20	40.83	41.67	71.87
Citizen interaction	70.35	80.52	28.13	30.28	73.18	53.22	30.26	19.56
Public service delivery	5.59	1.12	18.41	27.05	2.62	6.17	28.07	8.57
Total	150	520	284	351	68	56	141	78

categorized								
Total	159	550	354	423	94	61	185	106
extracted								

Second, we discovered tweets on enhancing public services, such as housing availability, customer service, urban planning, or education. Some of our early assumptions are reflected in these results. Finally, local government in West Java have issued calls to action, particularly in relation to municipal planning or reporting difficulties relating to fundamental council functions (i.e., traffic, waste management, public parks, pavements, police emergencies, etc.). Overall, public service has begun to be included into the social media use plans of some of local governments in West Java.

This article delves into the analysis of strategies for using social media by local governments in relation to the potential of digital technologies for public service delivery. This article offers proposed adjustments to Mergel's (2013) framework for government contacts with citizens via social media for this purpose. Our dimensions have been produced in the following manner: (1) giving information, (2) interacting with citizens, and (3) offering public services. This approach was evaluated using Twitter data from eight local governments in West Java Province.

The eight local government used Twitter extensively to disseminate information, which is consistent with prior social media research (Criado, Pastor, and Villodre 2018; Reddick, Chatfield, and Ojo 2017; Sáez, Haro, and Caba 2015; Bonsón, Royo, and Ratkai 2015; Mergel 2013). This result should not be seen as a flaw in local government social media management: studies have shown that platforms such as Twitter have the capacity to swiftly convey information to residents.

This ability for immediateness can be beneficial in specific instances, such as crises (Chatfield and Reddick 2018), but it can also be used to improve transparency (Bertot, Jaeger, and Grimes 2010), among other policy areas. Furthermore, our findings on bidirectional communication are varied. While some local governments have low levels of engagement, others are attempting to engage residents in dialogue (Reddick, Chatfield, and Ojo 2017; Sáez, Haro, and Caba 2015). This form of social media approach has placed a strong emphasis on customer service and responding to residents' needs. Finally, as predicted, Twitter use for public service delivery has been identified as a very early stage of social media utilization. Nonetheless, some local governments have used this platform to provide limited public service delivery as a supplement to offline efforts. This is one of the study's important results, and it supports our typology of distinct state policies in social media.

In this circumstance, communities should have educated their inhabitants' protective action decisions via warnings, advisories, and situational updates. Residents may have been safer; their homes and apartments may have been more secure because of following guidelines. If this were the case, communities would co-produce public safety and community resilience with their local governments. Straightforward, customer-oriented communications informing residents of service delays and event cancellations were also prevalent. While information mainly flowed in one direction from government to citizen, numerous communities did solicit feedback from citizens in a variety of circumstances.

The challenge for practitioners is to effectively balance and integrate public duties,

depending in part on the demands of the external environment, particularly the requirements of the people served. A fundamental challenge for public managers to evaluate is whether material provides substantial value to the community. Each public function is important, but not all are equally so, depending on the circumstances.

Low participation assessments are largely based on measures such as (a) the number of reactions or responses between authorities and residents (see Bonson, Royo, & Ratkai, 2017), and (b) the structure of information flow between them (see Mergel, 2013) one-to-many, one-to-one, and many-to-many models). While focusing on the form of interactions might provide helpful insights, it may overlook the underlying content of such exchanges and why organizations distribute communications in the first place.

Comparatively, notable variances in the proclivity of some local governments toward citizen participation and public service delivery have been discovered. On the one hand, some local governments appear to be more inclined to engage in more regular exchanges with residents through social media. This finding appears to be supported in part by the traditional social media adoption hypothesis, which holds that this group of administrative regimes is more likely to introduce innovations and reforms in terms of public administration digitalization (Bonsón, Royo, and Ratkai 2015; Pina, Lourdes, and Royo 2007). This discovery is significant since it is customary to believe that advanced social media stages include engagement and interactive usage (Khan 2013). However, in terms of public service delivery, some local governments' instances have also functioned admirably.

## CONCLUSION

One of the goals of this research was to look at the area of public service delivery via social media. Previous study has shown that, as predicted, public service delivery via social media is still a fledgling activity in local public administrations. Although they are still far from transactional models, our research has demonstrated how several local governments have used Twitter to assist the delivery of public services.

Fundamentally, this has been accomplished in two ways: a) through the promotion of calls for offline collaboration, and b) using messages containing public service warnings (e.g., weather alerts, traffic updates, pavement and street state, rubbish collection, etc.). This concept proposes that, while services given through social media platforms may not have the same qualities as those provided through digital government web sites, they do have other affordances connected to web 2.0 platform attributes. These benefits include the ability to enable collaborative and interactive activities, co-production dynamics, and the completion and direct delivery of services by government agencies.

All the above supports our recommendations to restructure the existing frameworks for social media adoption to incorporate public service delivery, at least at the local level of government. The typology is a complement to Mergel's (2013) framework. In general, the present research believes that social media can co-produce public service delivery since there are benefits to using these technologies to facilitate social transactions and supply communicative and interactive aspects of public services. At the same time, our findings provide sufficient evidence to support the notion that public service delivery via social media is now on the agenda of local governments in West Java Province.

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